



Alcohol Use During Pregnancy, 2003

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause growth deficits and permanent harm to the central nervous system of fetuses, affecting both mental and physical functioning of children. A safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy has not been established. Because the effects of alcohol use during pregnancy are so detrimental, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend that women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy drink no alcohol at all.

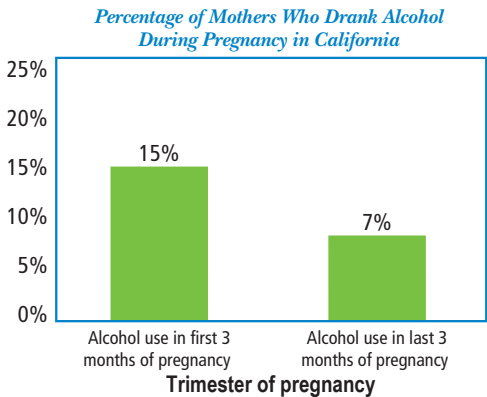
The California Maternal and Infant Health Assessment (MIHA) is a collaborative project of the California Department of Health Services, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Branch and researchers in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. Modeled on CDC's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS), MIHA is an annual, statewide, representative survey of women who recently gave birth, randomly sampled from birth certificate data. Self-administered surveys in English and Spanish are mailed to women 10 to 14 weeks postpartum, with telephone follow-up to non-respondents. Response rates for MIHA ranged from 70% - 74% during 1999-2003; approximately 3,500 mothers complete the survey each year. Completed surveys are linked with birth certificate data. Researchers do not have access to personal identifiers. This report focuses on data from 2003. For more information about MIHA, please see <http://www.mch.dhs.ca.gov/epidemiology/>

Alcohol Use During Pregnancy



Drinking Alcohol During Pregnancy

The national rate for drinking during pregnancy in 2002 was 10%.¹ Approximately 19% of women who gave birth in California during 2003 reported drinking during the first or last three months of pregnancy. Fifteen percent of California women drank alcohol during their first trimester of pregnancy, compared to approximately 7% in the third trimester. Fewer than 4% of women reported drinking in both their first and last three months of pregnancy.



¹Alcohol Consumption Among Women Who Are Pregnant or Who Might Become Pregnant—United States, 2002. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, December 24, 2004, 53(50):1178-1181.

²U.S. Surgeon General Releases Advisory on Alcohol Use in Pregnancy, February 1, 2005. (www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/pressreleases/sg02222005.html).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: www.nofas.org

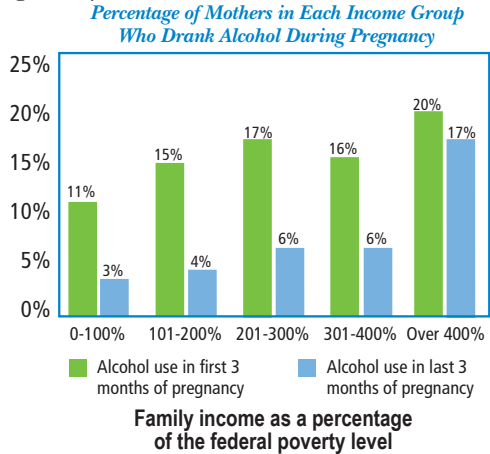
CDC: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas

National Institutes of Health: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/fetalalcoholsyndrome.html

March of Dimes: www.modimes.org/professionals/681_1170.asp

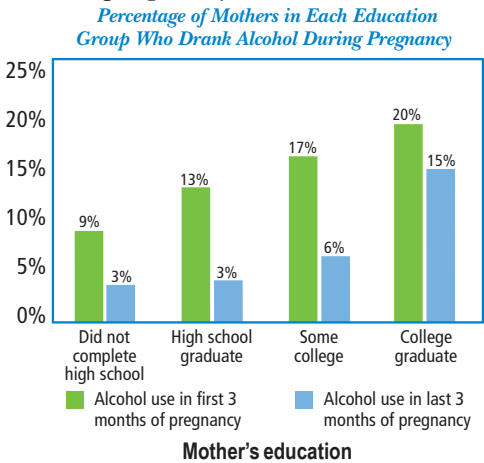
Family Income

Women with incomes within 100% of the federal poverty level reported the lowest rates of drinking alcohol during the first and last trimesters of pregnancy. Women with family incomes over 400% of the federal poverty level were twice as likely as the poorest women to drink during the first three months of pregnancy and over five times as likely to drink alcohol during the last three months of pregnancy.



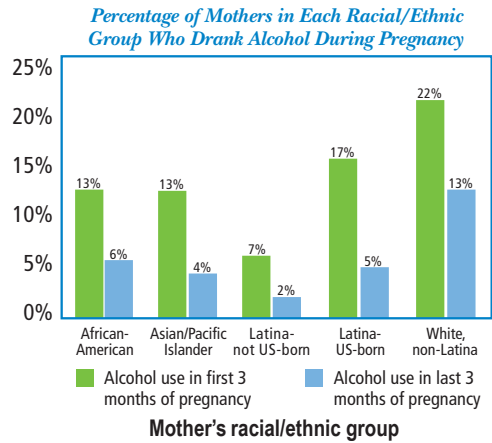
Mother's Education

Women who had at least a college degree reported the highest rates of drinking alcohol during the first and third trimesters of pregnancy. These women were 2-5 times more likely than women who had not completed college to drink alcohol during the last three months of pregnancy.



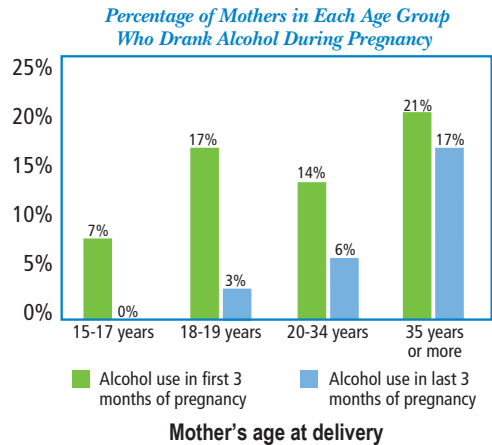
Mother's Racial/Ethnic Group

White, non-Latina women reported the highest rate of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, compared with other major racial/ethnic groups.



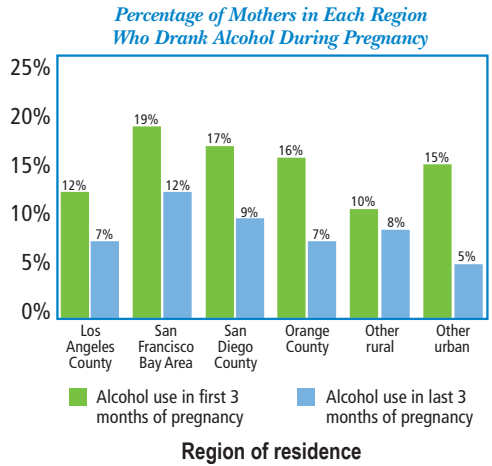
Mother's Age at Delivery

Young teens (age 15-17) were less likely to drink alcohol during the first and third trimesters of pregnancy, and older teens were less likely to drink alcohol during the last three months of pregnancy, compared with older women. Women 35 years of age and older had the highest rates of drinking in both the first and last three months of pregnancy.



Region

Women in the San Francisco Bay Area reported the highest rates of alcohol use during the first and last three months of pregnancy.



Summary

Pregnant women should not drink alcohol.² However, about 1 in 5 (19%) California women who gave birth in 2003 drank during the first or third trimester. This is twice the national rate of about 1 in 10 pregnant women in 2002.¹

California women who drank alcohol had a different profile than pregnant women with other risks. The women who were more likely to drink during pregnancy were White, older, college graduates, had a high income, or lived in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Drinking was more common in the first trimester than in the third. This is not surprising since the first trimester includes a period when women are unaware of their pregnancy. Given that 42% of women giving birth in California (2004) reported that their pregnancy was not intended, increased efforts are needed to encourage women of child-bearing age to avoid drinking alcohol.